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Before

The Middle East and Central Asia Subcommittee and The Oversight and  
Investigations Subcommittee of the  
House Committee on International Relations  
U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC  
March 9, 2006

Afghanistan Progress Report: Counternarcotics Efforts

Distinguished Chairs Ros-Lehtinen and Rohrabacher, Congressmen Ackerman and Delahunt, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to discuss our efforts to assist the government and people of Afghanistan in curbing the production and trafficking of illegal narcotics.

The State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) plays a key role in carrying out the President's National Drug Control Strategy. INL manages a diverse range of counternarcotics programs in approximately 150 countries throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Europe. These bilateral, regional, and global initiatives aim to fight the cultivation of drug crops at their source, disrupt the trafficking of drugs and precursor chemicals, and help build host-nation law enforcement capacity.

My statement today provides an overview of the contribution our counternarcotics programs make to the longer-term Afghan strategy. First, I will discuss the problem of narcotics in Afghanistan, and then I will discuss the U.S. Government's five-pillar counternarcotics strategy. My remarks will highlight the difficulties we are facing in Afghanistan and our plans to meet those challenges.

## **Narcotics Problem in Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is the world's leading producer of illicit opiates, accounting for nearly 90 percent of the global supply according to U.S. Government figures. Almost 8.7 percent of the Afghan population was involved in opium cultivation in 2005. Additionally, the export value of Afghan opiates in 2005 is estimated at \$2.7 billion. However, 80 percent of this money goes to drug trafficking networks and does not support the local rural Afghan communities.

The cultivation, production, and trafficking of opiates is a destabilizing influence in any country, but such trafficking is particularly dangerous to an emerging democracy such as Afghanistan. Promotion of economic development, rule of law, democratic elections, and a functioning civil society must be coupled with vigorous efforts to stem the tide of illicit narcotics and combat the accompanying corruption and instability. The continued support of counternarcotics efforts must remain an important part of overall U.S. policy in Afghanistan.

According to U.S. Government figures, there was a 48 percent decrease in poppy cultivation in 2005, down from record figures in 2004. However, due to favorable climate conditions, yield per hectare was up—resulting in only a 10 percent decrease in opium production. While we welcomed this decrease in 2005, early indications show that planting has significantly increased in 2006. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC's) Rapid Assessment Survey released in February 2006, poppy planting for the current growing season increased in 13 provinces, remained stable in 15, and decreased in only three.

## **Interconnecting Pillars: The Helmand Situation**

Of particular concern, some of the sharpest increases in cultivation are expected in Helmand, a southern province, a place of traditionally strong Taliban influence, and a historically significant producer of opium poppy. UNODC field reports indicate that Helmand has the highest cultivation level of opium poppy in Afghanistan with 26,500 hectares in 2005 and project a strong increase for Helmand in 2006. In addition, the security situation in Helmand has been under stress recently with an increase in insurgent activity. The increased poppy cultivation in Helmand, combined with these security concerns, demands our attention.

The situation in Helmand underscores the necessity of comprehensive counternarcotics efforts. Responding to this, Embassy Kabul has organized a task force consisting of representatives of the Government of Afghanistan (including the Afghan National Army and National Police), the U.K., the UNODC, INL, and the U.S. military to coordinate security and counternarcotics assistance. Embassy representatives have been traveling to the area to coordinate eradication efforts with the provincial governors of Helmand and its neighboring province of Kandahar (also a major poppy producer). The Governor of Helmand has promised full cooperation and has requested that additional Afghan police and army forces be sent to provide security.

Support to governor-led eradication and strategic deployment of the national Afghan Eradication Force provides the best immediate strategy for dealing with increased planting. U.S. and U.K. eradication specialists are working with the Minister of the Interior and several governors to develop detailed eradication operations plans for each province. Helmand will be the first focus. UNODC is providing valuable monitoring and verification assistance. Actions in Helmand will be closely watched by other governors; an early success there has the potential of invigorating other provinces into eradication compliance.

Supporting these eradication efforts, the public information campaign is disseminating eradication into messages, focusing on alternative livelihood programs, and stressing the importance of rule of law. Foreign and domestic media will be brought along on eradication missions and briefed on the criteria used in choosing what fields are to be eradicated. Alternative livelihoods efforts will also be focused on Helmand to encourage the transformation to a licit economy. Specific and current development efforts in the area include irrigation, roads, power, building export capability, and investing in agri-business improvements.

### **United States Government Five-Pillar Counternarcotics Plan**

The U.S. Government continues to implement and refine its five-pillar strategy for combating narcotics in Afghanistan, paying particular attention to provinces of concern such as Helmand, and making implementation changes as warranted. Our Public Information pillar focuses on convincing Afghans to reject opium poppy cultivation and trade. The Alternative

Livelihoods pillar efforts, spearheaded by USAID, establish economic alternatives to poppy cultivation. Our Eradication pillar centers on discouraging poppy planting and eradicating those fields when prevention is unsuccessful. Efforts under our Interdiction pillar focus on building Afghan capacity to destroy drug labs, seize precursor chemicals and opiates, and arrest major traffickers. The Law Enforcement/Justice Reform pillar assists the Afghan Government in building its capacity to arrest, prosecute, and punish traffickers and corrupt officials.

### *Public Information*

The Public Information campaign in Afghanistan is a key pillar in the effort to reduce the cultivation of opium poppy and the influence of the illegal drug trade. In addition to the media campaign with its focus on message development and product distribution, public information efforts also include capacity building, training, and research. The media campaign includes anti-drug messages spread through radio and television, posters, radio dramas, comic books, transit advertising, mobile cinema, calendars, billboards, banners, booklets, stickers, and matchbooks. The messages conveyed are rotated according to the poppy planting and growing seasons. The first phase, timed to coincide with planting decision making, roughly August through November, focused on steering farmers away from planting poppy, and the second phase, which just concluded, warned farmers of the threat of government-led eradication. The current third phase is an extension of previous efforts to warn of impending eradication and includes a pilot capacity-building program to train community stakeholders to deliver counternarcotics messages. The first groups to be trained are school teachers in Nangarhar province.

Overall campaign messages have included the ideas that growing poppy is against Islam and harmful for the reputation of Afghanistan. Last year, a group of approximately 350-400 Mullahs gathered to discuss ways to convince farmers that poppy growing was against Islam. The one-day event started with Afghan Government ministers discussing the importance of not cultivating poppy and trafficking in narcotics, followed by various Mullahs delivering presentations on how poppy farming and the drug trade were 'haram' or against Islam. Since then, local religious leaders have been delivering anti-poppy messages to congregations, and counternarcotics messages have even been delivered via loudspeakers at mosques.

Media products further convey this message. One poster, distributed throughout the country, included a depiction of a prosperous farmer surrounded by vegetables and a depiction of a miserable one in an eradicated, mowed-down poppy field. Other products focused on the overall deadly effects of opium. A new billboard at the airport will contain a tally of drug arrests at the airport to date.

Public affairs products and initiatives are undertaken in full coordination with appropriate entities of the Government of Afghanistan as well as the donor community and agencies of the United States Government. The campaign is conducted provincially, in close coordination with Poppy Elimination Program efforts, international observers, Provincial Governors' offices, and local authorities.

In addition to the media campaign, President Karzai plays an especially prominent and essential role in counternarcotics publicity efforts. In the past six months, he has made several speeches against opium cultivation, conducted shuras (a meeting of local political and tribal leaders) to win support for elimination efforts, and has held two governors conferences on counternarcotics. According to a recently completed survey conducted by INL, 73 percent of all Afghans have heard the counternarcotics message from President Karzai.

### *Alternative Livelihoods*

Providing farmers with economic opportunities and alternatives to poppy cultivation is an essential part of our counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan. The Department of State and USAID have been working through non-governmental organizations and contractors to help provide alternative livelihoods assistance to Afghan farmers, with USAID now having the primary interagency lead. All counternarcotics pillars are interdependent, and the alternative livelihoods program will only be effective at changing farmers' behavior if the risks and costs of poppy cultivation are increased through the other pillars.

Experience suggests that time is needed to provide sustainable livelihoods that are viable alternatives to growing poppy. Yet other factors push for quick solutions: the opium economy undermines the growth of the licit economy and it threatens the authority of the newly elected government. Thus, there is a need for immediate short-term assistance, as well as

sustainable long-term economic development. USAID cash-for-work projects provide an immediate short-term alternative source of income to households that are dependent on the opium economy. These projects, such as cleaning irrigation canals and repairing roads, provide an income bridge until comprehensive alternative livelihood programs are in place. To date, \$15.7 million has been paid in cash-for-work salaries to more than 193,000 farmers.

Comprehensive Development agricultural and business projects accelerate economic growth, create jobs, and provide sustainable alternatives to poppy cultivation over the medium- to long-term. USAID projects launched last year provided credit to nearly 5,500 farmers. They also supported planting fruit and nut trees on 3,000 hectares of former poppy-producing land in Nangarhar and Laghman (representing roughly 2 percent of arable land in Nangarhar and 7 percent in Laghman.) In addition, several investment proposals are under consideration, including agricultural processing factories.

High Visibility Projects target provinces not covered by comprehensive development programs. These initiatives demonstrate Government of Afghanistan concern and reward local counternarcotics initiatives to reduce poppy cultivation. A recent USAID project distributed seeds and fertilizer, accompanied by counternarcotics messages in the bags and on the radio, to 550,000 farmers in every district in all 34 provinces. Nearly 40,000 metric tons of fertilizer and 14,000 metric tons of wheat and vegetable seed have been provided, representing 10 percent of fertilizer and 20 percent of seed demand for the 2006 planting season. The distribution of the seeds and fertilizer was timed to compete with the poppy planting season, and many farmers in 97 percent of districts received seed and fertilizer in time for planting. USAID assistance is also being directed to reward provinces that have taken decisive action against poppy cultivation through a Good Performers Fund.

### *Eradication*

We cannot overstate the critical importance of a credible threat of forced eradication to the success of our comprehensive counternarcotics strategy. Alternative livelihood programs, even if successful, cannot replace dollar-for-dollar the income derived from poppy farming. A public information survey reports that farmers are aware of the Government of Afghanistan's

ban on poppy production and planned eradication, but many do not believe those measures will be enforced. However, the UNODC indicates that fear of eradication is the single most effective deterrent to cultivation in Afghanistan. This finding highlights the importance of a strong eradication campaign.

The Eradication pillar has been revised substantially in light of our deep concern with the disappointing results from the 2005 eradication efforts. Based on lessons learned, the Eradication pillar was restructured to focus our efforts more at the provincial level. Poppy Elimination Program (PEP) teams, composed of Afghans and international experts and advisors, are being deployed to the seven major poppy producing provinces (Kandahar, Nangarhar, Uruzgan, Farah, Badakhshan, Helmand, and Balkh). The PEP teams will ultimately be responsible for coordinating public information campaigns and alternative livelihoods programs, monitoring cultivation and compliance, reporting significant developments to senior levels of the Afghan Government, verifying provincial eradication efforts, and, when necessary, requesting eradication by national authorities. These teams, while supporting the governors, report to the Minister of Counter Narcotics, who monitors the governors' progress in eliminating opium poppy cultivation.

Already, PEP teams are working on reinforcing and further spreading our public information message and verifying governor-led eradication. International advisors have been deployed to Kandahar, Nangarhar, and Balkh. While the deployment of full teams, particularly the international advisors, has proceeded slower than planned, we still believe they will be instrumental in facilitating governor-led eradication efforts. Furthermore, U.S. and U.K. eradication specialists are working closely with the Ministry of Interior and select governors to develop detailed eradication operations plans for each province.

The Afghan Eradication Force (AEF), consisting of four mobile units of approximately 150 eradicators and security personnel each, supported by air assets, will be deployed by the Afghan Government to help meet poppy elimination objectives. The AEF will be deployed where the provincial efforts fail or where provincial governors request such assistance. Currently, as the eradication season begins and as we watch disturbing signals from Helmand, trained AEF teams are already being deployed there.

To support both the PEP teams and AEF, we have purchased ten Huey-II helicopters that will provide emergency medical evacuation, support and protection of ground personnel if attacked, logistical re-supply, air transportation, reconnaissance, and command and control for counternarcotics operations. Currently, six Huey IIs have arrived in Kandahar, a strategic base of operations for the poppy-producing southern provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, and Farah. The remaining helicopters will arrive in Kabul during March. A wet-lease arrangement includes five aircraft, 3 helicopters and 2 fixed-wing, that provide both medium- and heavy-lift capabilities to support deployment of our eradication forces, move PEP teams, and support interdiction operations.

### *Interdiction*

Interdiction efforts are focused on decreasing narcotics trafficking and processing in Afghanistan. Together with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and our international allies, we are helping to build Afghan capacity to disrupt and dismantle the most significant drug trafficking organizations operating in Afghanistan through the arrest and prosecution of the command and control elements of these organizations.

The Afghan Ministry of Interior established the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) to be responsible for nationwide counternarcotics law enforcement. DEA rotates Foreign Advisory Support Teams (FAST) every 90-120 days to support five specialized units of the CNPA. These five National Interdiction Unit (NIU) teams are comprised of 25 members each, with every unit currently functional—having completed FAST-led basic training in 2005. The NIU is receiving advanced training in such areas as firearms, navigation, raid execution, arresting and interviewing techniques, and evidence collection.

Working with DEA, the CNPA seized 42.9 metric tons of opium and 5.5 metric tons of heroin in 2005. They also shut down 247 clandestine conversion labs and arrested or detained 32 individuals on charges related to these seizures. An additional 100-plus tons of opium and 30 tons of heroin were destroyed during operations of the Afghan Special Narcotics Force (ASNF), another paramilitary operational group within the CNPA that has conducted some joint operations with the NIU. This is a special force that has been in operation for two years, responsible for conducting interdictions



and disruption activities against major drug operations, especially heroin laboratories, drug stockpiles, and wholesale market locations.

Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) provides air lift, medevac, *in extremis* support, helicopter assets, and pilot training to support interdiction missions. The Department of Defense has refurbished three MI-17 helicopters for the ASNF, leased two MI-17s for the NIU, and has committed to provide eight MI-17s to the Ministry of Interior for interdiction operations, with the first four scheduled to arrive in May/June 2006.

### *Law Enforcement/Justice Reform*

Law Enforcement/Justice Reform efforts in Afghanistan encompass both police and justice efforts to increase overall rule of law. While some of these programs are focused specifically on counternarcotics, general programs bolstering the rule of law in Afghanistan are vital, as they seek to improve public confidence in law enforcement by creating an atmosphere in which corruption, narcotics trafficking, and other illicit activities are effectively countered. Having an effective arrest and conviction mechanism is fundamental, because without legal consequences to follow Afghan interdiction efforts, we would essentially leave specially trained Afghan police powerless to do anything more than simply destroy the drugs they seize and temporarily detain suspects. As such, our overall counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan consists of interrelated elements, one of which must be the deterrence of illegality through regularized legal structures and building Afghan law enforcement's capacities to prosecute illicit activity when it does occur.

U.S. Government support for rule of law programs in Afghanistan is broadly divided among three agencies: USAID focuses on civil law issues; INL funds programs focused on improving the criminal justice system at large including police training; and INL funds the Department of Justice (DOJ) Senior Federal Prosecutor Program in Kabul that provides law reform advice and assistance and training, mentoring, and support of the Afghan counternarcotics task force of prosecutors and police.

The goal of the U.S. police assistance program, in coordination with the international community and the Afghan Ministry of Interior, is to develop rapidly an Afghan capacity to provide public security. The program helps Afghanistan develop a competent, professional, civilian police force with the

necessary training, equipment, infrastructure, institutional capacity, and organizational structure to enforce the rule of law in Afghanistan. To reach that goal, we are providing basic training to a total of 62,000 police, including 3,600 highway police and 12,000 border police.

To support training needs, the U.S. operates a Central Training Center in Kabul and Regional Training Centers (RTC) in Gardez, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Konduz, Jalalabad, Bamiyan, and Herat. Utilizing these facilities, INL has trained more than 60,000 police as of late February 2006 including nearly 6,000 border police and 1,590 highway patrol.

In 2005, we enhanced the training program with mentoring initiatives and support for reform at the Ministry of Interior (MOI). The program also supported developing critically needed infrastructure and providing equipment support to ensure that the police have all the skills and tools they need to perform effectively and professionally.

We currently supply approximately 80 police advisors and 148 mentors in country and intend to deploy 100 more mentors during the first quarter of 2006. Mentors are deployed to more than 24 provinces and engage directly with local and provincial police officials to provide critical on-the-job training, guidance, and mentoring to help professionalize police throughout the country.

The curriculum of the police-training program has been expanded and enhanced substantially over the last six months. Some of the new courses we have developed include firearms safety, maintenance and qualification; defensive driving; literacy education; counternarcotics skills; and professional standards/ethics.

We also continue to work with the Government of Afghanistan to implement police reform initiatives at the MOI to help it transition into a professional democratic police organization. This year we are focusing on pay and rank reform. This program will restructure the police, eliminating the top-heavy nature of the current organization while simultaneously bringing pay for Afghan Police to a level commensurate with equivalent ranks in the Afghan National Army. The initiative has the added benefit of reducing corruption among the senior leadership of the MOI, since applicants for positions in the new structure must undergo a competitive process including testing, background checks, and oral board interviews.

Anti-corruption efforts are key to the long-term success of the Afghan law enforcement sector and counternarcotics efforts. We consider eliminating corruption a high priority and are working closely with the newly developed Professional Standards Unit at the MOI to help mentor and guide efforts to pursue high-level corruption investigations.

This next year will be absolutely critical for the Afghan police; border police in particular. Afghanistan's capability to control its borders effectively will contribute directly to its ability to exert central government control over its territory and to collect the tax revenues necessary to sustain its basic operating budget independent of significant support from donor nations. Thus, the Department of State is working closely with other U.S. agencies, particularly the Department of Defense, to ensure that our efforts to train and mentor border police are closely tied into the larger Border Management Initiative led by the U.S. Government.

Development of the Afghan police must be complemented by the establishment of an effective criminal justice sector. Justice Reform efforts in Afghanistan have two primary components: criminal justice reform and corrections support. A subcomponent of both is support for counternarcotics prosecution. Programs in both criminal justice reform and corrections are designed to support the work the police and interdiction units are doing to bring drug production and trafficking to a halt.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has posted three senior experienced U.S. prosecutors in Kabul, with a fourth to be deployed in the next months, to build counternarcotics investigative and prosecution capacity. In addition, DOJ and INL will deploy four U.S. criminal investigative mentors to assist the prosecutors in these efforts. The DOJ prosecutors and soon-to-be-deployed criminal investigators, working along with their Afghan counterparts and their international Coalition partners from the U.K., U.N., and Norway, provide training, assistance, and mentoring support to the Vertical Prosecution Task Force (VPTF). The VPTF is made up of approximately 30 Afghan prosecutors and 35 to 40 Afghan investigators. The DOJ prosecutors also provide advice and assistance to the VPTF in their narcotics prosecutions in Kabul and in their work toward extradition for prosecution in the U.S. and elsewhere.

The Central Narcotics Tribunal (CNT), consisting of 14 judges specifically assigned to hear significant narcotics cases, has exclusive nationwide jurisdiction established by presidential decree, and is now fully operational. Major narcotics and narcotics-related cases, regardless of where they originate, have now been ordered transferred to Kabul for trial in the CNT. Currently, the VPTF is preparing and trying several dozen cases before the Central Narcotics Tribunal. Eventually, offices for the Tribunal and VPTF, courtroom space, and secure detention facilities will all be co-located in a secure Afghan-run facility, the Counter Narcotics Justice Center. The Department of Defense is constructing the facility, and INL will provide operations and maintenance support to the Government of Afghanistan for the completed facilities. DOJ has been integrally involved in planning the facility and will continue to provide training and mentoring in the completed center.

The comprehensive Anti-Narcotics Law was enacted in December 2005. This law is an important step in supporting Amendment 7 of the Afghan Constitution to prevent the cultivation and smuggling of narcotic drugs. In addition to all forms of narcotics trafficking, the Law also makes criminal many narcotics-related offenses, such as money laundering, corruption, and violent offenses. This comprehensive law provides for the modern investigative and prosecutorial procedures necessary to fight narcotics trafficking in Afghanistan.

Significantly, the Afghan Government's commitment to tackling the narcotics trade was demonstrated in October 2005 with the extradition of Haji Baz Mohammad to the United States under the 1988 United Nations convention against narcotics. Baz Mohammad is now in U.S. custody and awaiting trial in federal court in New York. This marked the first time Afghanistan permitted the extradition of one of its citizens for drug trafficking to a foreign country.

Other INL justice programs provide support to the Government of Afghanistan to improve the administration and enforcement of the rule of law. These include two programs based in Kabul, one for criminal justice reform, the other for corrections support. The Justice Sector Support Program consists of criminal justice advisors who provide legal counsel and mentoring to Afghan justice personnel. The program is helping to improve the capacities of the permanent justice institutions by supporting organizational reform, standardization of policies and procedures, and by

providing equipment and supplies to the Ministries of Justice and Interior and the Attorney General's Office. Our criminal justice experts train and mentor judges, prosecutors, and defense counsel in criminal procedures, cases, and trials. The second program, INL's Corrections System Support Program, provides training, capacity-building, and infrastructure support to the corrections system in Kabul and key provinces. This program is linked closely to the justice and police programs, as well as other international efforts to reform and support the severely damaged prison system, managed by the Ministry of Justice.

We work closely with our Afghan and international counterparts in implementing our justice programs, which include the National Legal Training Center, a joint U.S.-Italian-Afghan initiative to establish a facility to provide standardized legal training and mentoring. The center, which should be completed by Italy by the end of 2006, will receive equipment and legal training support through our above-mentioned justice program. Along with supporting legal training, we also recognize that legal education is critical to ensuring that a professional, qualified cadre of legal experts can support the justice system in the future. Thus, we have started implementing a \$2 million, three-year grant offering law professors from Afghan Universities the opportunity to participate in an intensive year-long Master of Laws (LL.M.) program at a U.S. law school focusing on comparative law, modern legal practices, and criminal law and procedures. We have also sponsored two small but important grants that have taught legal awareness and rights to Afghan girls and women in Kabul and brought Afghan women judges to the U.S. for judicial training.

## **Conclusion**

The seriousness of the narcotics problem in Afghanistan calls for a long-term commitment on the part of the U.S. Government to combat narcotics production and trafficking. U.S. efforts are focused on the interrelated pillars of Public Information, Alternative Livelihoods, Elimination/Eradication, Interdiction, and Law Enforcement/Justice Reform. The five-pillar program is a cooperative interagency effort coordinated both in Kabul and Washington, and implemented in conjunction with our international partners. Only by working together to fight vigorously against narcotics will we be able to help Afghanistan on its road to becoming a fully functioning democracy and to building economic stability.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.